

13. Where the Sheltered Homeless Are

Nationally, according to HUD, nearly a third of the homeless are estimated to be in the West. This is over 7 percent more than any other geographic area. Nevertheless, only 27 percent of the shelters nationwide are located in the Western region. This represents a shortfall of nearly 6 percent. The South, by comparison, has disproportionately more shelter capacity than homeless.

WHERE THE SHELTERED HOMELESS ARE

<u>County</u>	1990-1998				
	<u>1990</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1994</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>1998</u>
Box Elder	N/A	N/A	N/A	.02%	.01%
Cache	.06%	.06%	.07%	.04%	.06%
Duchesne	.05%	.05%	.06%	.07%	.03%
Carbon	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Grand	.06%	.06%	.03%	0%	.01%
Salt Lake	75%	63%	63%	65%	70%
Sanpete	.05%	.06%	.08%	.07%	.06%
Sevier	.07%	1%	.01%	1.7%	.06%
Summit	N/A	N/A	N/A	.03%	.03%
Uintah	1%	1%	1%	1%	.06%
Utah	4%	6%	7.5%	3.5%	1.8%
Washington	2%	2%	1.5%	2%	1.6%
Weber	13%	23%	22%	22%	22%

The problems of the rural homeless are somewhat unique: according to a national study, "The rural homeless are four times more likely to have spent the previous night with family or friends (41 versus 11 percent for urban homeless), while the urban homeless are far more likely to rely on missions or shelters for lodging (37 versus 11 percent)."¹ Patton attributes this to the fact that "rural residents have a long tradition of preferring self-help and reliance on relatives, friends, and neighbors to taxpayer-supported programs, which has effectively disguised the magnitude of the problem of rural homelessness." Unfortunately, rural areas "seldom have in place a formal social service network that would permit the transient homeless to gather or be counted. In fact, they are often met with hostility and suspicion by community residents."² In our studies, we find that the biggest upsurge in homelessness was initially in rural counties (outside Salt Lake, Summit, Utah, and Weber), which went from 7 percent to as high as fourteen, before stabilizing at about six percent. This probably primarily reflects the additional sheltering space offered in urban areas while the numbers of beds in rural areas have stayed somewhat the same.

All shelters have a maximum capacity, which once reached, a point prevalence count becomes static even though the population may continue to grow. Therefore, beginning with 31 July 1991, we asked each provider how many persons were on waiting lists for their facility. Our reports of shelter waiting lists on 31 July 1998 indicate:

Salt Lake County 100
Weber County 21

¹Larry T. Patton, "The Rural Homeless," in *Homelessness, Health and Human Needs* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1988), p. 195.

²Larry T. Patton, "The Rural Homeless," in *Homelessness, Health and Human Needs* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 1988), p. 184.